The Shell of the Heart

Unlocking Our Potential for Growth, Improvement, and Maturity

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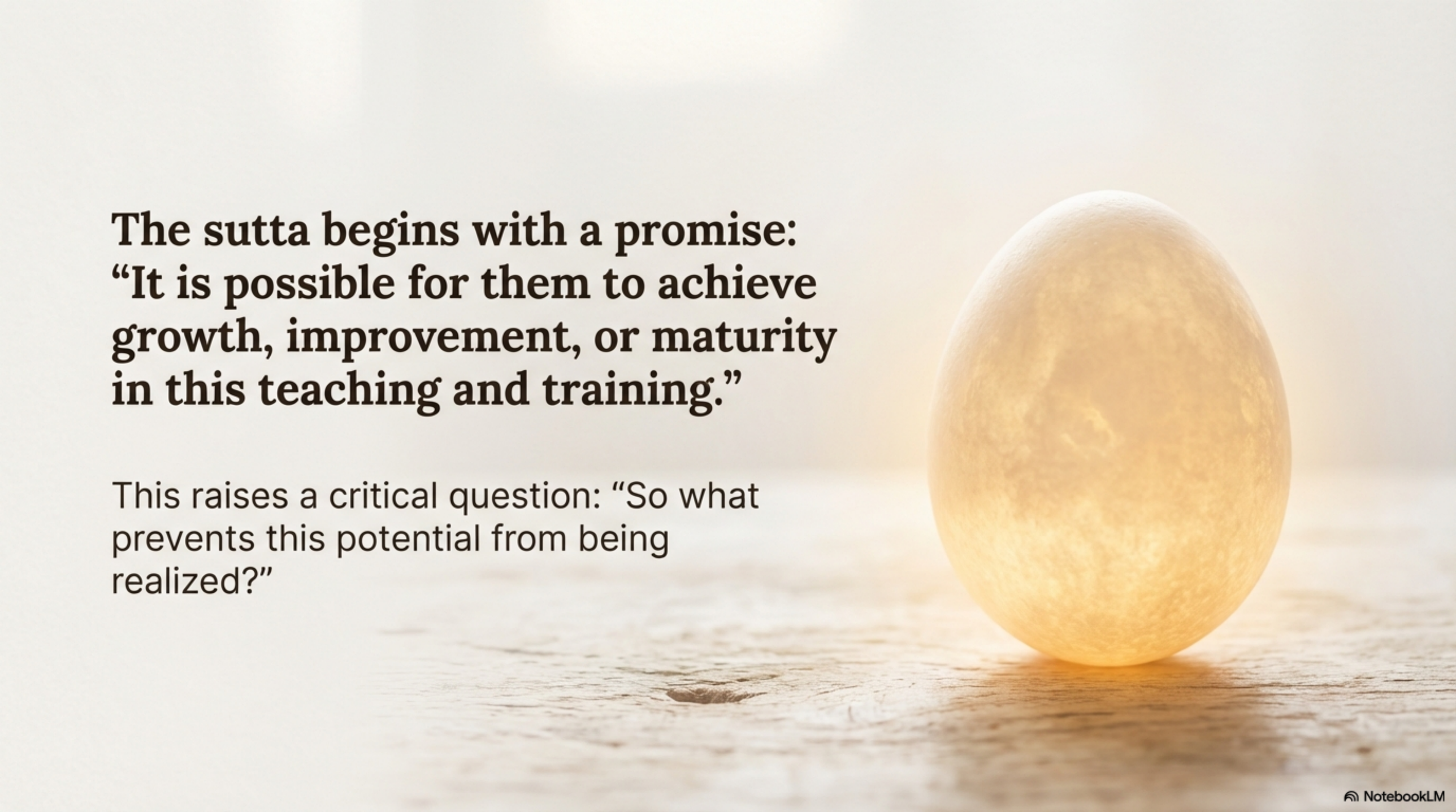
The sutta begins with a promise: “It is possible for them to achieve growth, improvement, or maturity in this teaching and training.”

This raises a critical question: “So what prevents this potential from being realized?”



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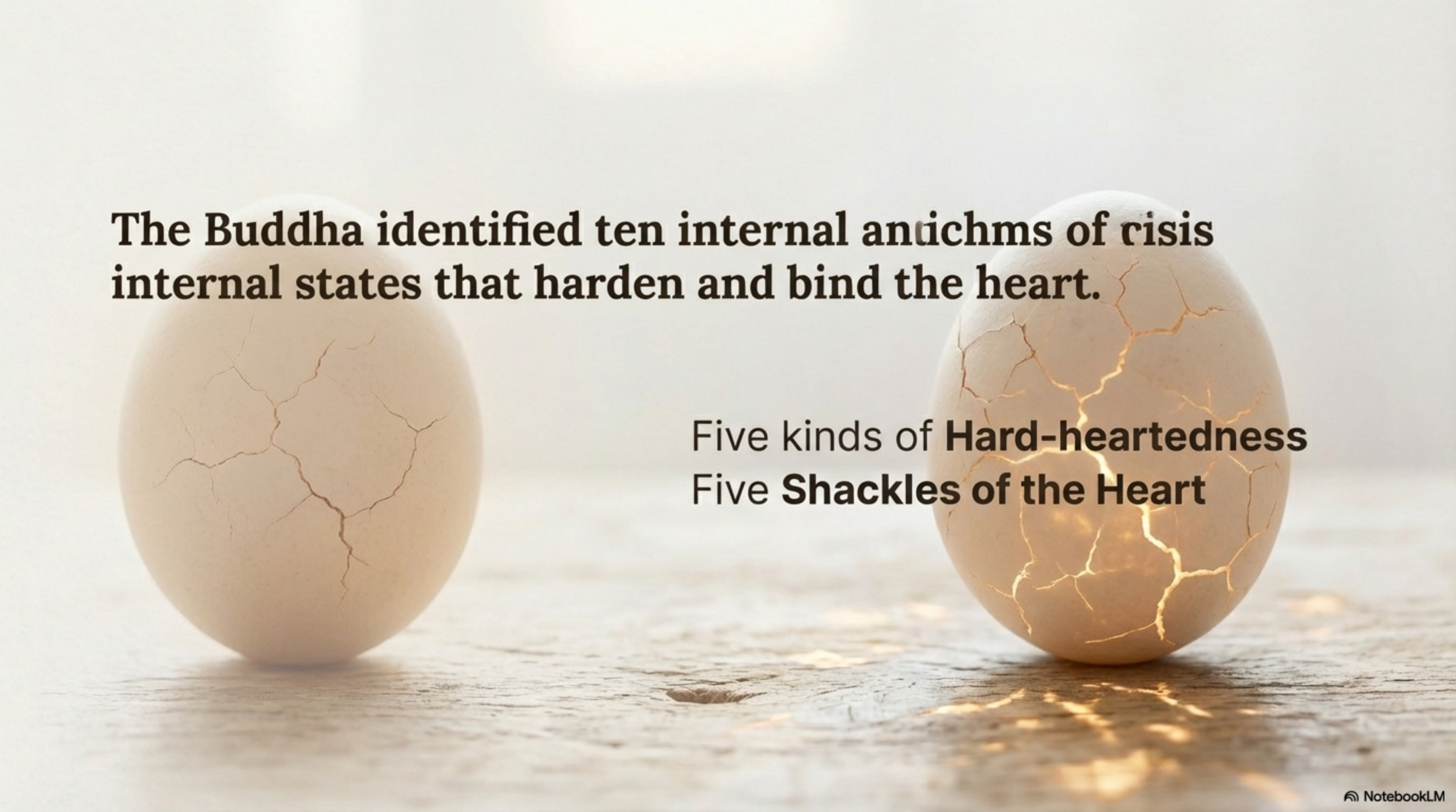
The Buddha identified ten internal antichms of risis
internal states that harden and bind the heart.
Five kinds of Hard-heartedness
Five Shackles of the Heart

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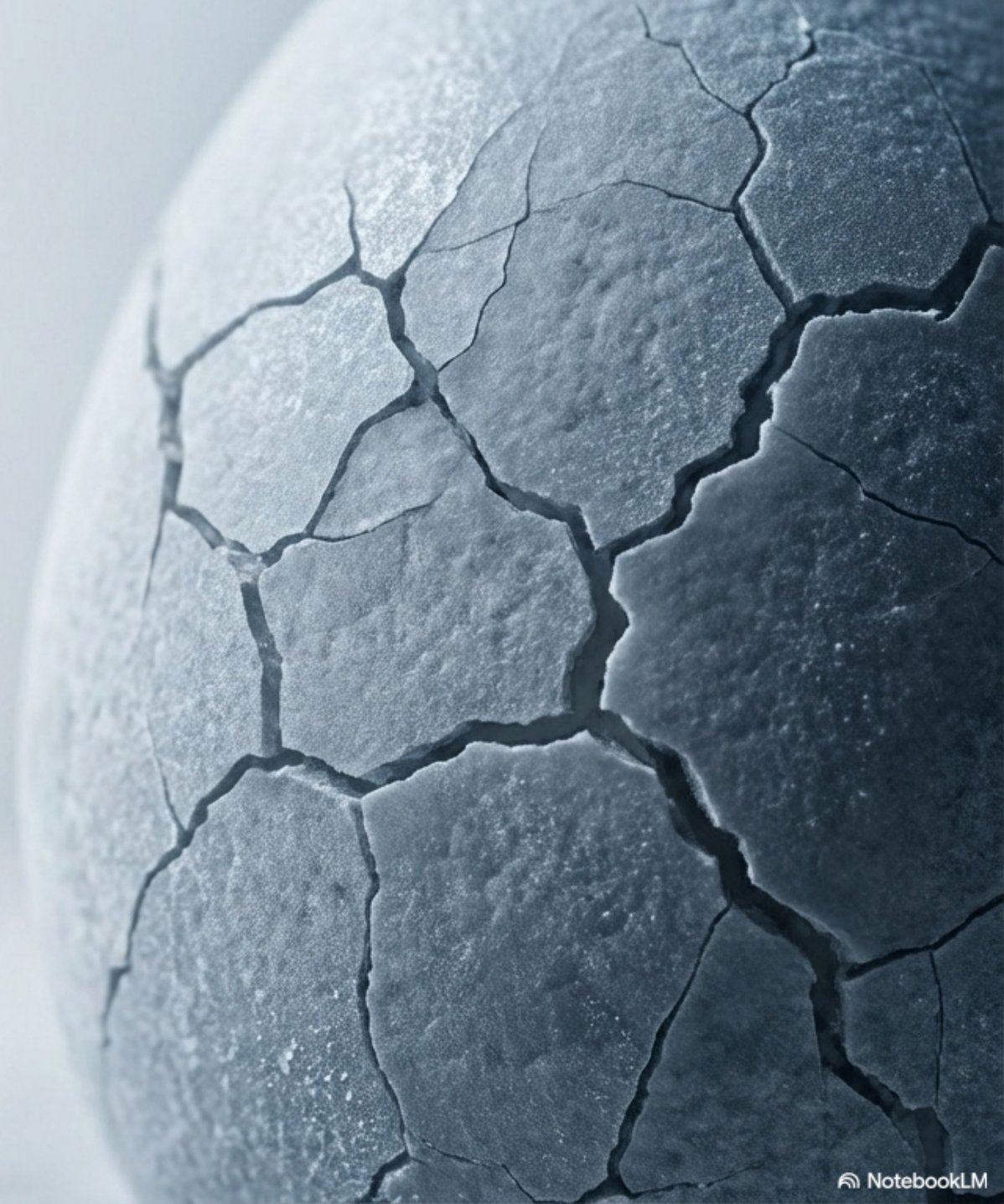
Part I: **Hard-heartedness**

The internal states of doubt and resentment that make the mind rigid and closed-off.



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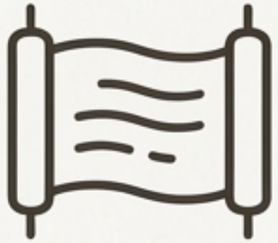

The first four are a failure of confidence, where one has doubts about:

1. The Teacher
2. The Teaching
3. The Saṅgha (The Community)
4. The Training

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The fifth is a **failure of harmony:**

“A mendicant is angry and upset with their spiritual companions, resentful and closed off.”

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The result of this **hardness** is always the same:

“This being so, their mind doesn’t incline toward keenness, commitment, persistence, and striving.”

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Part II:
Shackles of the Heart

The external attachments and indulgences that bind the mind.

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The first three are shackles of greed and craving:

1. Greed for **sensual pleasures**
2. Greed for **the body**
3. Greed for **form**

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The final two are shackles of **misapplied effort**:

4. Indulging in “the pleasures of sleeping, lying down, and drowsing.”

5. Leading the spiritual life with the hope of being reborn as a god.

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The result of being shackled is the same:

“This being so, their mind doesn’t incline toward keenness, commitment, persistence, and striving.”

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“When a mendicant has given up these five kinds of hard-heartedness and severed these five shackles of the heart...”

“...it is possible for them to achieve growth, improvement, and maturity.”

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The mind is transformed:

“This being so, their mind inclines toward keenness, commitment, persistence, and striving.”

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The Buddha explains this with an analogy:

“Suppose there was a chicken with eight or ten or twelve eggs. And she properly sat on them to keep them warm and incubated…’

‘Even if that chicken doesn’t wish: ‘If only my chicks could break out…”

‘Still they can break out and hatch safely.’

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The final promise:

“In the same way, a mendicant who possesses these fifteen factors, including vigor, is capable of breaking out, becoming awakened, and reaching the supreme sanctuary from the yoke.”

Awakening is not a fight. It is a natural emergence.

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